

## **BRIDG MEETING ON NARA STRATEGIC PLAN**

July 13, 2000

### **Introduction**

Michael Miller, Director, Modern Records Programs, introduced the Archivist of the United States, John Carlin, and Deputy Archivist, Lewis Bellardo. The Archivist explained that NARA is updating its Strategic Plan, *Ready Access to Essential Evidence: The Strategic Plan of the National Archives and Records Administration*. The proposed revision has been posted on the NARA web site and otherwise distributed to solicit a broad range of comments.

### **Overview of the Draft Revision**

The draft revision is based on the current status of projects and initiatives and also reflects an increased emphasis on electronic records.

The Archivist explained that NARA has moved away from the concept of consolidation of regional facilities. NARA is committed to the renovation of Archives I, construction of a new archival facility for the Southeast Region, and other physical improvements of facilities.

The Archivist and Deputy Archivist described new initiatives and achievements.

- Expanding electronic access to archival holdings by development of the Archival Research Catalog.
- Launching the Electronic Records Archives, a research project focused on preservation of all types of electronic records.
- Redirecting records management toward the targeted assistance initiative encourages reaching out to agencies to conduct joint projects that will have Government-wide applicability, both at headquarters and in the field. These partnerships are aimed at teaching agencies the skills and techniques for developing records management solutions of their own.
- Re-encasing the Charters of Freedom - the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights - to protect these documents from damage or degradation for the foreseeable future.
- Increasing funding for preservation of non-textual records and for the use of cold storage for various film formats, which will slow deterioration.

## **Goal 1 and Records Management**

Mike Miller reviewed the three measures and targets for Goal 1 (essential evidence will be created, identified, appropriately scheduled, and managed for as long as needed), the goal most relevant to agency records management programs. The draft plan measures targeted assistance, the percentage of new records series scheduled, and the time required for NARA schedule processing and approval. He invited attendees to let NARA know if these areas are meaningful or if others should be substituted.

An agency representative commented that the strategic plan is very assertive, but she believed that the timeline might be too ambitious for the early years and less in the later years. As NARA's partners, agencies may not be able to keep up the pace initially.

A FIRM representative requested clarification of the target that provides that, by 2007, 100% of targeted assistance partnership agreements will deliver the results promised. The Archivist clarified that targeted assistance is an ongoing approach to providing service to agencies, not a specific set of projects. NARA intends to continue to work with agencies on an ongoing basis, instead of just providing direction. However, each year a number of projects will be identified as being part of the targeted assistance initiative. By 2007, every completed targeted assistance project will meet its desired goals.

## **Chief Information Officers and Records Management**

One participant suggested that chief executives be evaluated on their compliance with records management laws to increase visibility of records management. The Archivist, Deputy Archivist, and several records officers responded that positive reinforcement was more effective than negative reinforcement. Records officers need to provide assistance and point out how good records management practices can contribute to improved operations in their agencies. Agency internal training is much more effective when concentrated on the practicalities and benefits of records management rather than the dry legal and regulatory requirements.

Some records officers expressed concern that they are not part of the organization headed by the Chief Information Officer, stating a belief that separation from the unit responsible for major information management policies hampers effectiveness. Information technology staffs may initiate projects that affect recordkeeping, but that also ignore or contradict NARA regulatory requirements. The Deputy Archivist reported that he had discussed the Government Paperwork Elimination Act (GPEA) with the CIO Council, whose members recognize that they need information on the records management implications of the new law.

The group was interested in the guidance to be issued on implementation of the GPEA. NARA, along with Treasury, Justice, and Commerce, will be issuing guidance. The Deputy Archivist explained that OMB originally wanted to reconcile differences in the drafts prepared by each of the four agencies before any were issued. OMB has now decided that NARA guidance can be issued separately. NARA expects to issue guidance before the end of the quarter.

## **NARA Guidance on Electronic Records**

A records officer stated that NARA records management guidance has not always kept up with current work processes. With automation, processes may flow into other processes, making identification of discrete series or collections of related series difficult. Another records officer suggested that NARA guidance should be directed at end-users and top management officials. Mike Miller noted that NARA's primary agency customers are records officers, who should integrate NARA regulations and issuances into internal policies, procedures, and guidance reflecting the agency's processes and terminology. In addition, another records officer suggested that NARA guidance should reflect the reality that electronic records schedules with a few broad items following processes or functions are much easier for users than schedules with multiple specific items. This issue is one that the Appraisal and Scheduling Project will consider.

## **The Appraisal and Scheduling Project**

The Deputy Archivist reported on the records appraisal and scheduling project. NARA will issue an RFP (request for proposal) to contract for a survey of information from selected agency records officers, inspectors general, information technology managers, and other agency staff on work processes to identify, among other things, records that protect rights and permit oversight and accountability. This study will also involve analyses of records systems and how automation has affected records. It will cover workflow processes, use of teams, information warehousing, the impact of downsizing the records management function, elimination of clerical staff, and outsourcing.

## **Electronic Access to Records Schedules**

A records officer asked about the electronic access to records schedules from other agencies. Mike Miller responded that we maintain the Agency Records Disposition Online Resource (ARDOR) on the NARA web site. ARDOR contains links to schedules posted on many agency web sites, as well as to the NARA General Records Schedules. As agencies post their schedules on the web, they should notify NARA and provide the correct URL for establishing a link to them. This information should be sent to [records.mgt@arch2.nara.gov](mailto:records.mgt@arch2.nara.gov). Schedule linkage is a win-win situation for both agencies and NARA. One benefit of the expanded schedule coverage is that when agencies plan to update their schedules, they can check current schedules and dispositions for similar records.

The Office of the Federal Register is working on techniques and standards for total electronic submission and publication of *Federal Register* notices, and development of standards for electronic submission of schedules will build on that effort.

## **Gaps Project**

One records officer noted that NARA is aggressive in its records scheduling program, but much more passive in seeking to accession permanent records. The Archivist responded that the Office of Records Services - Washington, DC, is working on a Gaps Project that will capture information about permanent records disposition authorities and track records transferred to

NARA. A pilot study involving several agencies is underway to refine project procedures. After the report on the pilot is approved, more information will be provided to the agencies.

Concerning transfer of permanent records, Mike Miller reported more than 300,000 cubic feet of permanent records at the Washington National Records Center (WNRC) are being transferred as a result of the WNRC Project. The Archivist added that increased NARA activity with agencies in the regions has uncovered additional permanent records that are being transferred to NARA regional archives.

## **Conclusion**

The Archivist concluded the meeting by urging participants to submit comments by July 21, 2000, on the draft revision of the NARA Strategic Plan and reiterated NARA's commitment to continue working in partnership with agencies.